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DALE KEOWN
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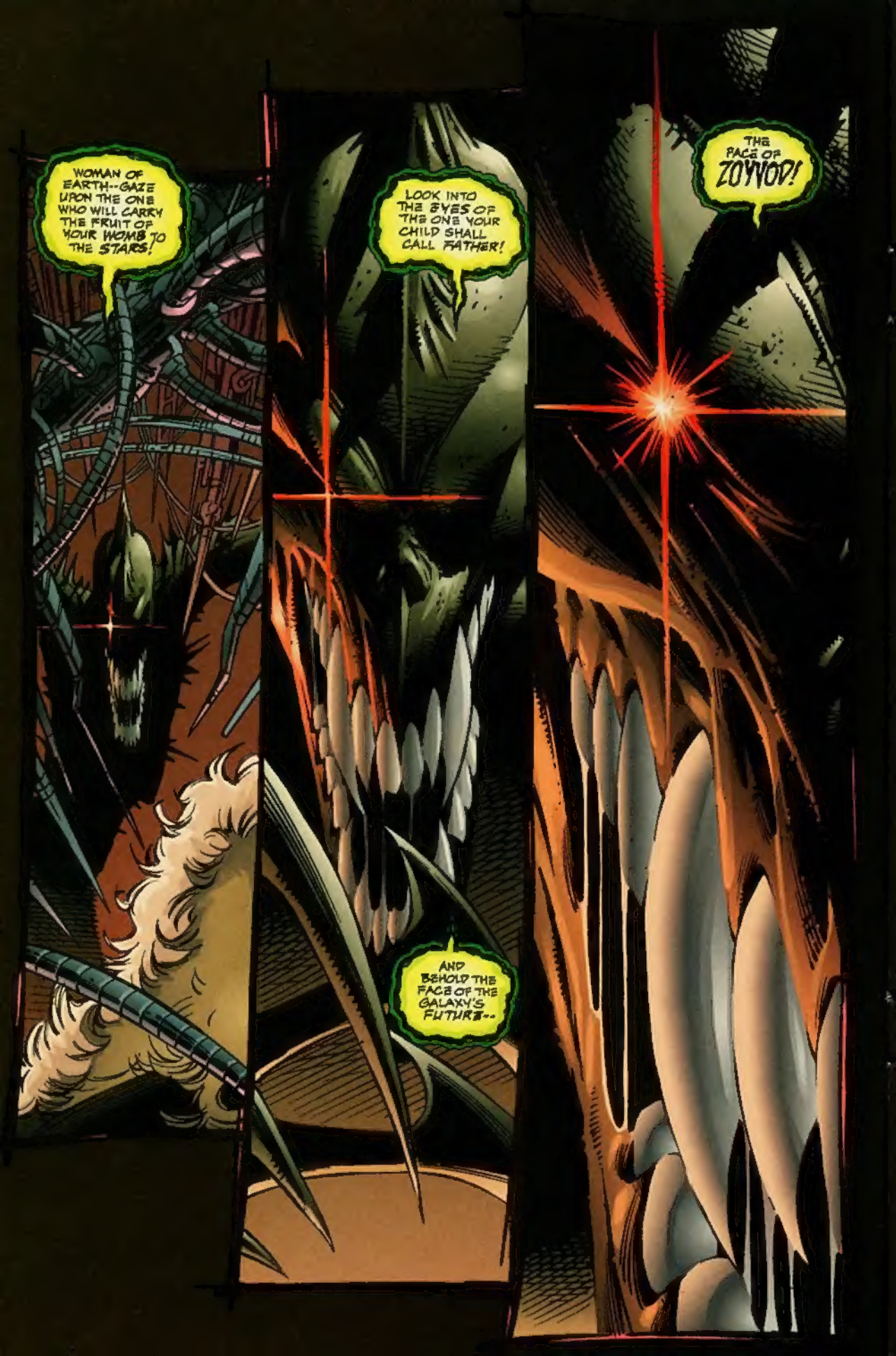
THE PARTING:
HIGH ABOVE THE WORLD, IN THE SILENCE OF SPACE, THE BEING KNOWN AS JEREB, CHILD OF FUTURE LIGHT, BADE FAREWELL TO THE CREED HYBRID WHOSE BODY AND MIND HE SHARED FOR SO LONG.
I AM GREATLY INDEBTED TO YOU, PITT. YOU KEPT ME ALIVE AT GREAT RISK TO YOURSELF AND OTHERS.
THERE IS ONE MORE THING I MUST SHARE WITH YOU.
YOU WILL REMAIN HERE ON EARTH. THIS IS YOUR HOME NOW.
BUT BEFORE I TAKE MY LEAVE...
THE TRUTH.

THE JOURNEY OF YOUR ESSENCE BEGAN ON THIS PLANET NEARLY TEN SOLAR ORBITS AGO.
HARTFORD M
HOSPI
IT MAY SURPRISE YOU TO LEARN THAT YOU WERE CONCEIVED NOT IN THE FURNACE OF WAR BUT IN THE GENTLER WARMTH OF A JOYOUS UNION.
YOU WERE MEANT TO BE A LOVING SON, NOT A WARRIOR. NOT AN ASSASSIN.
AND NOT ALONE IN THE VASTNESS OF THE UNIVERSE.
ANNIE--!
--TWINS, ALLEN. YOU'RE GOING TO BE A FATHER TWICE.
THE MALE OF THE PAIR FELT BOTH ELATION AND TERROR.
FATHERHOOD WAS A PROSPECT HE CHERISHED-- BUT ALSO AN IMMENSE RESPONSIBILITY.
HE AND HIS MATE WERE STILL SO YOUNG--STILL FRAMING THE PATTERNS OF THEIR OWN LIVES--!

DON'T KID ME, ALLEN-- YOU'RE SCARED TO DEATH, AREN'T YOU?
OKAY. YEAH. I AM.
THOUGH HIGHLY ADAPTABLE, MOST HUMANS NONETHELESS RELY HEAVILY UPON SUCH PATTERNS AS A FRAMEWORK FOR THEIR THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS.
WELL-- SO AM I.
TO ALTER THAT FRAMEWORK IN ANY WAY IS TO INITIATE A COMPLEX SEQUENCE OF COPING STRATEGIES.
DOES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER--OR WORSE?
DISMANTLE THE FRAMEWORK AND YOU SHATTER THE HUMAN WHO BUILT IT.
THAT IS WHAT HAPPENED TO ANN AND ALLEN BRACKEN.

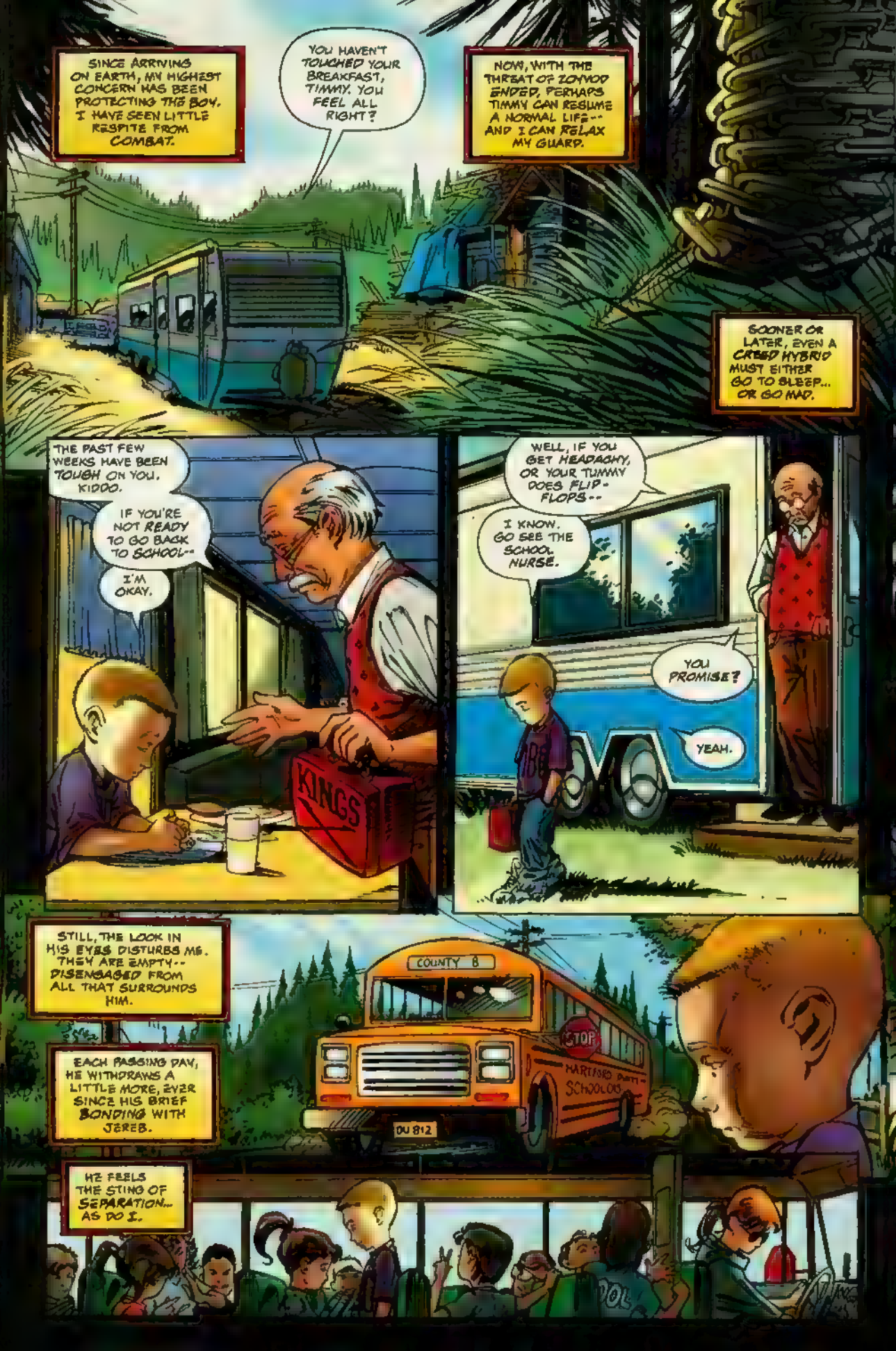
BARELY HAD THEY BEGUN TO GRASP THE CHANGES THAT CHILDREN WOULD BRING TO THEIR LIVES...
CHANK!
...WHEN A FORCE BEYOND COMPREHENSION TOOK THE MATTER OUT OF THEIR HANDS.
INDEED, IT ROBBED THEM OF ALL CONTROL OVER THEIR EXISTENCE.
UNABLE TO MOVE, UNABLE TO SPEAK, THEY COULD ONLY STARE IN MUTE HORROR...
...AND SUCKED THEM INTO ITS OWN.
...AS THE ALIEN FORCE DEMOLISHED THE VERY CONTEXT OF THEIR BEING...
SMASH!

THAT FORCE WAS THE CREED.
OR RATHER, AN EVEN MORE ANCIENT RACE WHOM THE CREED HELD IN BONDAGE.
BUT THE IRONY OF SLAVES TRADING IN SLAVES WAS SURELY LOST ON THE BRACKENS.
WHILE THE MAN COULD DO NAUGHT BUT LISTEN TO HER SCREAMS--AND DESPAIR.
BY THE TIME THE SHIP HAD CLEARED EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE, THE WOMAN WAS ADRIFT IN A SEA OF PAIN.
A THOUSAND TINY NEEDLES PROBED EVERY INCH OF HER FLESH.
SHE IS THE ONE, ISN'T SHE?


WOMAN OF EARTH--GAZE UPON THE ONE WHO WILL CARRY THE FRUIT OF YOUR WOMB TO THE STARS!
LOOK INTO THE EYES OF THE ONE YOUR CHILD SHALL CALL FATHER!
AND BEHOLD THE FACE OF THE GALAXY'S FUTURE--
THE FACE OF ZO'YOD!

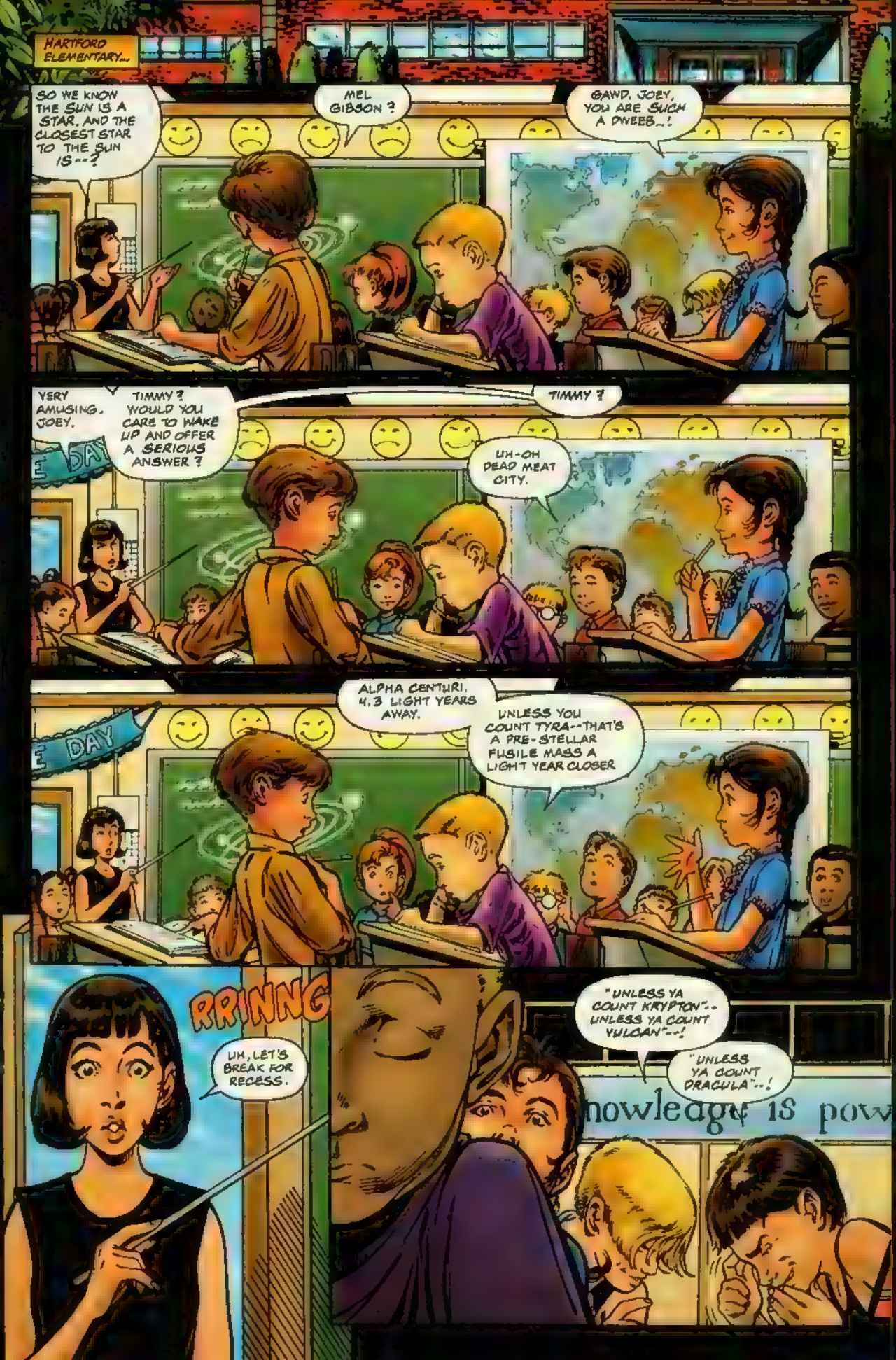
JUST BEFORE DAWN, POLICE DISCOVERED THE BRACKENS AND THEIR WRECKED VEHICLE.
ANNIE--!
DEAR GOD--THE BABIES--!
EMERGENCY
NEITHER ANN NOR ALLEN HAD SUFFERED SO MUCH AS A SCRATCH...
...WHICH LEFT DOCTORS GROPING TO EXPLAIN HER COMA AND THE GAPS IN HIS RECALL.
DOCTOR--WHAT ABOUT THE BABIES? ARE THEY--CAN THEY--SURVIVE?
BABY, MR. BRACKEN. SINGULAR.
I BEG YOUR--YOU TOLD US--TWINS--!
ZOYVOD HAD ERASED THEIR MEMORY OF THE "ACCIDENT" AND THEIR TIME ABOARD THE CREED SHIP.
THE SECOND FETUS HAS... VANISHED.
THERE'S NO EVIDENCE IT EVER EXISTED.
BY THE TIME THOSE WORDS WERE SPOKEN, THE SECOND FETUS WAS 10,000 LIGHT YEARS FROM HOME.
ITS GENETIC STRUCTURE HAD BEEN RECOMBINED WITH ZOYVOD'S.
IT HAD BEGUN THE VOYAGE, PITT, THAT WOULD RESULT IN YOU.

THE PRESENT:
A WOODED AREA OUTSIDE HARTFORD CONNECTICUT...
WHO-- JERAB--?
NO.
HE DOESN'T LICK.
HMM--?
THE HUNTER'S DOG *
--SNIFF--
SO ANOTHER PIECE OF CHATTEL HAS ESCAPED ITS TORMENTOR. GOOD.
NOW GO AWAY.
I NEED TO SLEEP..!
SLUP
SLUP
*THEY MET IN PITT #3. --DALE


SINCE ARRIVING ON EARTH, MY HIGHEST CONCERN HAS BEEN PROTECTING THE BOY. I HAVE SEEN LITTLE RESPITE FROM COMBAT.
YOU HAVEN'T TOUCHED YOUR BREAKFAST, TIMMY. YOU FEEL ALL RIGHT?
NOW, WITH THE THREAT OF ZOVOD ENDED, PERHAPS TIMMY CAN RESUME A NORMAL LIFE-- AND I CAN RELAX MY GUARD.
SOONER OR LATER, EVEN A CREED HYBRID MUST EITHER GO TO SLEEP... OR GO MAD.
THE PAST FEW WEEKS HAVE BEEN TOUGH ON YOU, KIDDO.
IF YOU'RE NOT READY TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL--
I'M OKAY.
KINGS
WELL, IF YOU GET HEADACHY, OR YOUR TUMMY DOES FLIP-FLOPS--
I KNOW. GO SEE THE SCHOOL NURSE.
YOU PROMISE?
YEAH.
STILL, THE LOOK IN HIS EYES DISTURBS ME. THEY ARE EMPTY-- DISENGAGED FROM ALL THAT SURROUNDS HIM.
EACH PASSING DAY, HE WITHDRAWS A LITTLE MORE, EVER SINCE HIS BRIEF BONDING WITH JEREB.
HE FEELS THE STING OF SEPARATION... AS DO I.
COUNTY 8
STOP
HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
DU 812

HOW COULD ANY MORTAL KNOW THE WONDER AND PEACE OF JEREB'S LIGHT--
--AND NOT LAMENT ITS DEPARTURE?
WITH TIME, THOUGH, THE BOY WILL ADJUST. FOR ME, IT WILL BE HARDER.
WISDOM COMES LESS EASILY TO ONE WHOSE VERY GENES SCREAM FOR BATTLE.
Hef
Hef Hef
GNACH
GRRUNNF
GRRNACH!

RURF! RURF!
GRR! RURF! RURF!
NOW WHAT--?!
HAVE YOU EXHUMED SOME CREATURE'S ROTTING REMAINS, OR AN EQUALLY TASTY--
--NOT QUITE.
BAD DOG!
THAT IS THE HEAD OF A CREED BOUNTY HUNTER!*
ONE CAN NEVER BE CERTAIN IF THESE SPACE-SCUM ARE DEAD--
--OR JUST RECHARGING!
KLANK
KLANK
*DECAPITATED IN PITT #2. -DALE


HARTFORD ELEMENTARY...
SO WE KNOW THE SUN IS A STAR, AND THE CLOSEST STAR TO THE SUN IS--?
MEL GIBSON ?
GAWD, JOEY, YOU ARE SUCH A DWEEB...!
VERY AMUSING, JOEY.
TIMMY ? WOULD YOU CARE TO WAKE UP AND OFFER A SERIOUS ANSWER ?
TIMMY ?
UH-OH DEAD MEAT CITY.
ALPHA CENTURI, 4.3 LIGHT YEARS AWAY.
UNLESS YOU COUNT TYRA--THAT'S A PRE-STELLAR FUSILE MASS A LIGHT YEAR CLOSER
RRINNG
UH, LET'S BREAK FOR RECESS.
"UNLESS YA COUNT KRYPTON"... UNLESS YA COUNT VULCAN"--!
"UNLESS YA COUNT DRACULA"...!
nowledge is pow

WHERE'D YOU COME UP WITH THAT STUFF?! I THOUGHT MS. BROWN WAS GONNA MOO!
TIMMY...?
ANYBODY HOME?
THUK
NICE HAIRCUT, BRACKEN! DID IT COME WITH YOUR NEW BRAIN?
—AUKK—
YOU KNOW HOW WE FEEL ABOUT SUCK-UPS, TIMBO.
'SPECIALLY CREWCUT SUCK-UPS!
YOU'RE GONNA BE MYSTERY MEAT AT LUNCH-TIME!
EAT HEARTY-- SO YOU'LL HAVE SOMETHIN' TO PUKE!
GREEN DAY
GEEZ -- I HATE GETTING PUNCHED IN THE GUT.
YEAH
THEY TRY IT, THEY DIE.

MEANWHILE..
HUH. MICRO-THRUSTERS. GOOD TRICK.
--AND LOCKED.
NOW ALL YOU NEED IS A BLASTER... AND A HAND TO FIRE IT WITH.
INITIATING GENETIC SCAN.
VERIFIED: PITT. CREED TRAITOR. TARGET CONFIRMED--
TEN--
NINE--
KRATCH!
INITIATING TERMINAL DESTRUCT SEQUENCE.

EIGHT--
SO I WAS TOO GENTLE WITH YOU LAST TIME?
CRUNCH!
POINT TAKEN.
SEVEN--
SIX--
FIVE--
I WILL NOT--MAKE--THAT MISTAKE--AGAIN--!
ZERO?
ZERO.
DETONATE
BA-CHOOM!

AAAAA!
TIMMY!! WHAT'S WRONG?!
I DUNNO, MELVIN... MY HEAD... FEELS LIKE MY BRAIN'S BLOWIN' UP...!
YOU DON'T LOOK SO GOOD, MAN.
MAYBE YOU OUGHTTA GO HOME.
BRACKEN'S NOT GOIN' ANYWHERE--
--EXCEPT DOWN!
ARE YA, BRACKEN?
--HURK!--
LOOK! BRACKEN'S HITTIN' HIMSELF IN THE FACE--!
WHY'RE YA DOIN' THAT, BRACKEN?
WHAK WHAK WHAK
YOU CRAZY?
OR JUST STU--

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SONUVAGUN.
SOUNDED LIKE SOMEBODY WAS BLASTING OUT HERE--
BUT IT LOOKS MORE LIKE A METEOR HIT!
FUNNY I'D SWEAR I SAW SOMETHING MOVE DOWN THERE...!
YOU DID.
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE DOG? DID YOU SEE IT?
NOPE. NO DOG AROUND WHEN I SHOWED UP.
FOR THAT MATTER, WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE? YOU KNOW I DON'T WANT YOU HOVERING AROUND TIMMY.
YES. I KNOW.
HOWEVER, I DO NOT CARE--
NOT WHEN THE BOY'S LIFE IS IN PERIL.

WHAK
WHAK
OWW!
YOU'RE HITTIN' YOURSELF IN THE FACE, KEVIN!
HOW COME-- YOU CRAZY, HUH? YOU STUPID?!
WHAK
YAAAAA
OMIGOD OMIGOD OMIGOD
I WANNA GET SOMETHIN' OFF MY CHEST, KEVIN-- YOU!
ALL OF YOU!
THIS'S FOR ME--AND MELVIN --AND EVERYBODY YOU EVER PICKED ON!
THIS IS JUSTICE, KEVBO...!

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TIMMY.
PUT THEM DOWN.
THIS IS NOT RIGHT. THIS IS NOT WHY JEREB LEFT A PART OF HIS ESSENCE IN YOU.
SAYS WHO--?
YOU!!
THE GALACTIC ASSASSIN'S GONNA TELL ME WHAT'S RIGHT?!
GET OFF!!
TIMMY, LISTEN TO 'IM! IF YOU DROP THOSE GUYS--!
I CANNOT ALTER WHAT ZOVVOD BRED INTO ME.
AND I CANNOT SURRENDER TO IT, EITHER--
--WITHOUT BECOMING THE THING I MOST DESPISE.
YOU ARE THE BULLY NOW.
IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT?
THEY STARTED IT!
THEY ALWAYS START IT!
THEY HURT ME-- THEY HURT EVERYBODY-- AND THEN LAUGH ABOUT IT!
THEY'VE GOTTA LEARN THEIR LESSON!
THEY'VE GOTTA D--
VUNCH
AWAKE

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IT'S YOUR FAULT I'VE GOT THIS-- POWER-- IN MY HEAD!
EVERY TIME YOU SHOW UP, SOMETHIN' GOES CRAZY!
WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?!
WHAT?
RRAGH
I WANNA KNOW, PITT-- ALL OF IT!
WHO YOU ARE-- WHERE YOU CAME FROM--
--WHY YOU WON'T LET ME ALONE!
AN' YOU'RE GONNA TELL--
'CAUSE I CAN MAKE IT HURT A LOT WORSE!